



THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

March 24, 2004

TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
FM: ROBERT E. WALLACE, Executive Director *Wallace*  
VFW Washington Office

RE: **VETERANS HEALTH CARE FUNDING**

On behalf of the 2.6 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and our Ladies Auxiliary, it is my duty to inform you that the FY 2005 House Budget Resolution does not provide adequate funding to meet the needs of sick and disabled veterans seeking care from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system. As such, I encourage you to vote it down!

With the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid projecting a 7.8% increase in health care spending and VA officials testifying that the veterans' health care system requires a 13-14% increase annually and the House Veterans Affairs Committee's Views and Estimates recommended a \$2.5 billion increase to maintain current VA health care services, the House Budget Committee has chosen to ignore their colleagues' expert recommendations and the facts. Further, the VFW, in testimony before the House Budget Committee, identified a need for a \$3.2 billion increase.

This budget will do nothing to help the thousands of veterans waiting six months or more to see a primary care physician; in fact, it will drive many out of the system all together. You or I would not accept this type of health care so why should America's veterans? The VFW recommended level of funding is also critical to caring for those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. This funding request tracks the real needs of the VA to provide quality health care in a timely manner to all veterans enrolled in the system.

Again, I encourage you and your colleagues to vote the budget down! Veterans Health Care funding must be increased if this nation is to meet its obligation to those men and women who have so valiantly served her.

★WASHINGTON OFFICE★  
VFW MEMORIAL BUILDING • 200 MARYLAND AVENUE, N.E. • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002-5799  
AREA CODE 202-543-2239 • FAX 202-543-6719

# THE INDEPENDENT BUDGET

*A Budget for Veterans by Veterans*

[www.independentbudget.org](http://www.independentbudget.org)

March 23, 2004

All Members  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the co-authors of *The Independent Budget (IB)*, AMVETS (American Veterans), Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, we are writing to urge you to oppose and vote against H. Con. Res. 393, the House budget resolution for fiscal year 2005.

For veterans' discretionary programs, primarily veterans' medical care, H. Con. Res. 393 would provide \$1.3 billion below the minimum amount of funding determined necessary by the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, and \$2.0 billion below the amount of funding recommended by the IB just for VA health care services.

Despite an increase over the President's Budget request released in February, the budget resolution does not provide adequate funding for veterans' health care to meet the needs of sick and disabled veterans seeking care from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health system. Last year, the Under Secretary for Health of the VA testified that the VA needs approximately 13 percent to 14 percent annually just to meet the costs of inflation and mandated salary increases. This budget does not even come close to meeting those needs.

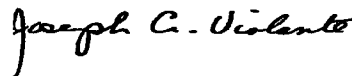
The co-authors of the IB call on you to reject this half-hearted attempt to fund veterans' health care. Passage of the Budget Resolution, as presented, would be a disservice to those men and women who have served this country and who are currently serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world in our fight against terrorism.

The IB veterans service organizations ask that Congress restore some sense of reason, responsibility, and justice to the budget process. Please vote to defeat this ill-advised budget resolution.


Sincerely,



Rick Jones  
National Legislative Director  
AMVETS



Joseph A. Violante  
National Legislative Director  
Disabled American Veterans



Richard B. Fuller  
National Legislative Director  
Paralyzed Veterans of America



Dennis Cullinan  
National Legislative Director  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
of the United States

A Joint Project of:

AMVETS  
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Lanham, MD 20706  
(301) 459-9600  
[www.amvets.org](http://www.amvets.org)

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS  
807 Maine Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20024-2410  
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PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA  
801 Eighteenth Street, NW  
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[www.pva.org](http://www.pva.org)

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS  
OF THE UNITED STATES  
200 Maryland Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
(202) 543-2239  
[www.vfwdc.org](http://www.vfwdc.org)

# DAV **DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS**

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*Building Better Lives for America's Disabled Veterans*

March 23, 2004

Every Member of the United States House of Representatives

Dear Representative:

As National Commander of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), I write to urge you to oppose and vote against H. Con. Res. 393, the House budget resolution for fiscal year 2005.


For veterans' discretionary programs, primarily veterans' medical care, H. Con. Res. 393 would provide \$1.1 billion below the minimum amount of funding determined necessary by the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, and \$2.7 billion below the amount of funding recommended by *The Independent Budget* prepared by the DAV, AMVETS, the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

The inadequate appropriations provided in H. Con. Res. 393 will support medical treatment for 170,000 fewer veterans than the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) could treat with the funding recommended by the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and will support 13,000 fewer full-time employees for veterans' medical care. With the level of appropriations in the House budget resolution, VA will be required to delay medical care for some veterans, and deny it altogether for other sick and disabled veterans, just to enable it to meet inflationary costs, including increases in employee wages.

Shortchanging veterans in H. Con. Res. 393 is all the more objectionable because it is in no way necessitated by our fiscal situation, but rather is part of a larger objective to make deep cuts in spending on veterans' and other domestic programs at the same time far more costly cuts are made in taxes. The House budget resolution is also all the more objectionable because it is part of a greater plan to impose cuts in discretionary programs, such as veterans' medical care, and impose a freeze on any improvements or adjustments in benefit programs, such as veterans' disability compensation, in FY 2006 through FY 2009. To the veterans of this Nation, it is incomprehensible that our Government cannot afford to fund their medical care and benefit programs at a time it can afford generous tax cuts costing hundreds of billions more.

The DAV must ask that Congress restore some sense of reason, responsibility, and justice to the budget process. There must be some balance between the goal of reducing taxes and the governmental responsibility of meeting our national obligation to veterans, whose contributions and sacrifices have made us the most secure and prosperous nation on earth. The DAV must ask that you vote to defeat this ill-advised budget resolution.

Sincerely,



Alan W. Bowers  
National Commander



March 23, 2004

All Members  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

As the House of Representatives prepares to consider the FY 2005 Budget Resolution, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) strongly urges you to oppose the resolution. Despite an increase over the President's Budget Request released in February, the budget resolution does not provide adequate funding for veterans' health care to meet the needs of sick and disabled veterans seeking care from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health system.

The House Budget Resolution provides \$1.2 billion over the President's request, only \$1.5 billion over the FY 2004 appropriated level. Last year, the Under Secretary for Health of the VA testified that the VA needs approximately 13 percent to 14 percent annually just to meet the costs of inflation and mandated salary increases. This budget does not even come close to meeting those needs.

*The Independent Budget*, a comprehensive budget policy document co-authored by PVA, AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, and Veterans of Foreign Wars, recommends \$29.8 billion for veterans' health care for FY 2005. This funding request tracks the real needs of the VA to provide quality health care in a timely manner to all veterans enrolled in the system.

If passed, this resolution will only fuel efforts to deny more veterans health care and charge veterans more for the care they receive. PVA calls on you to reject this half-hearted attempt to fund veterans' health care and only support a measure that provides adequate funding. Passage of the Budget Resolution as presented would be a disservice to those men and women who have served this country and who are currently serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Sincerely,

Richard B. Fuller  
National Legislative Director

Chartered by the Congress of the United States

801 Eighteenth Street, NW ★ Washington, DC 20006-3517  
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# BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION

477 H STREET NORTHWEST • WASHINGTON DC 20001-2694 • (202) 371-8880

March 23, 2004

Dear Representative:

The Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) urges you to oppose the FY2005 Budget Resolution. Despite an increase over the President's Budget Request released in February, the budget resolution does not provide adequate funding to meet the needs of sick and disabled veterans seeking care from the system. The proposal is an insult not only to current veterans who served their country honorable, but also to the men and women at this moment all over the world protecting democracy. BVA questions the priorities of this Congress.

BVA is the only Congressionally chartered veterans service organization exclusively dedicated to serving the needs of our Nation's blinded veterans and their families. Currently, over 2,500 blinded veterans await entrance into one of ten VA Blind Rehabilitation Centers across the country. Most Centers are currently operating at reduced staff levels. Without a substantial increase in funding, this waiting list will continue to grow.

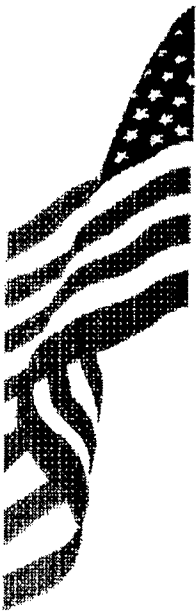
BVA endorses *The Independent Budget*, a comprehensive budget policy document co-authored by PVA, AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, and Veterans of Foreign Wars, which recommends \$29.8 billion for funding for veterans' health care for FY 2005. This funding request tracks the real needs of the VA to provide quality health care in a timely manner to all veterans enrolled in the system.

If you truly support our men and women in uniform, and are concerned about defending this great Nation, you will vote against this budget resolution. Defeating the current proposal is the patriotic action to take.

Sincerely,

/s/

Thomas H. Miller  
Executive Director



**SERVING  
WITH  
PRIDE**



**A M V E T S**

NATIONAL  
HEADQUARTERS  
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TELEPHONE: 301-459-9000  
FAX: 301-459-7924  
E-MAIL: amvets@amvets.org

March 23, 2004

All Members  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the nationwide membership of AMVETS and the many veterans who live in your district, I write to ask you to vote in opposition to the fiscal year 2005 Budget Resolution scheduled for consideration this week.

As currently written, the Budget Committee's proposal does not, repeat not, recommend adequate discretionary funding for VA to carry out veterans' programs. This is especially true in the area of VA health care.

While it recommends increasing overall discretionary funding \$1.2 billion over last year's mark, the House Budget Resolution remains \$1.8 billion below the level needed to simply carry forward the same level of services from this year into next year.

Unfortunately too many sick and disabled veterans seeking health care end up either waiting in lines for treatment or find themselves entirely barred from access because the system does not have the funds to provide the care they earned as a direct result of their past military service.

If the House Budget Resolution cannot arrange priorities within a \$2 trillion budget to meet the benefits veterans earned and richly deserve, something is wrong with their priorities.

While we applaud work to strengthen the economy through an economic growth proposal, the House Budget Resolution should recognize the value of the federal role in critical programs impacting millions of veterans.

Until it recommends a realistic budget for VA health care, the House Budget Resolution should be defeated. Veterans have paid the price for health care. Now, they need your vote to see the benefits they earned.

Sincerely,

Richard Jones  
National Legislative Director

March 24, 2004

The Honorable Jim Nussle, Chairman  
Committee on Budget  
United States House of Representatives  
Room 309, Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6065

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The American Legion has activated its grassroots lobbying efforts to defeat H. Con. Res. 393, the budget resolution for FY 05 through FY 09. Had this budget resolution been carried out to 10 years like H. Con. Res. 95 last year, nobody in your chamber would vote for it.

The American Legion shares your concern for addressing the deficit, but this is not a new issue or the right approach - balancing the books on the backs of present and future veterans, especially those leaving Walter Reed and other military medical facilities. If you plan to exempt national security and homeland defense, why aren't veterans' programs exempt as well? The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) serves as medical backup for both. After all, every program within VA is the end result of warfare.

The bipartisan views and estimates of the Veterans' Affairs Committee is more consistent with the recommendations of every major national veterans' service organization. These representatives are the official voices of veterans in your local communities.

Mr. Chairman, America is at war. Every day new veterans and survivors are being created. The American Legion fully supports the American GI - past, present, and future - and his or her family. This budget resolution is not in the best interest of the entire veterans' community.

I urge you to vote NO on H. Con. Res. 393.

Sincerely,

Steve Robertson, Director  
National Legislative Commission